



# *Info@starklawlibrary.org*

*Stark County Law Library Association*

*January 2005*

## BEGINNERS

## THOMAS

**The email address, [info@starklawlibrary.org](mailto:info@starklawlibrary.org) really works! TRY IT!!**

The THOMAS website <<http://thomas.loc.gov/>> has been around for a long time, it began with a directive "to make Federal legislative information freely available to the Internet public. [A] Library of Congress team brought the THOMAS World Wide Web system online in January 1995, at the inception of the 104th Congress."<sup>1</sup>

Now it is getting a facelift. The following is from an announcement on the upcoming release of the new design for THOMAS <<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/redesign/>>. "The 109th Congress convenes at noon on January 4, 2005. In preparation for that, we have been working to improve the appearance and the usefulness of THOMAS, the Library of Congress' public legislative information system. We expect the updated site to be released on January 4, but in the meantime we invite you to preview the updated THOMAS... ." <sup>2</sup>

Listed below are some of the major changes:

1. The homepage, <<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/redesign/home.html>> with better organized links and two new features:

- the ability to search the most recent legislative action ("Action Yesterday") and
  - a link to the latest issue of the Daily Digest
2. The combination of Bill Text and Bill Summary with Status links into a single Bills & Resolutions <<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/redesign/search.html>> page for simple, basic searches
  3. Combination of all [Congressional Record and Congressional Record Index links] <<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/redesign/r108query.html>> into one page
  4. Addition of the capability to search Bill Text across multiple Congresses. <<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/redesign/multi.html>>.

The links included above are for illustration only. Searches and links on the pages will not be in effect until next year. <sup>3</sup>



## INTERMEDIATE

## Safe E-mail?

**E-mail is neither secure nor private - unless it is encrypted.**

The phrase "safe e-mail" has become something of an oxymoron. E-mail is neither secure nor private - unless it is encrypted. So why should you bother with the encryption of your e-mail? I can give you three good reasons - misdelivery, nondelivery and outright snooping.

**Misdelivery** is usually due to human error, and increases as our workloads increase. Ways that your email may be misdelivered include:

- Typing errors in the address bar
- Picking the wrong name from a contacts list
- Clicking on "Reply to All"
- And less often, software problems

**Nondelivery** is WAY more common because of the manner in which email travels and the use of spam filters. It is not uncommon for 30 - 40% of initial email communications not to be seen by the intended recipient.<sup>4</sup> Though delivery rates do improve after both parties set their spam filters to accept the other's address. To make matters even worse, each piece of e-mail passes through as many as 10 - 30 mail servers, routers, other computers and similar hardware along its way to your mailbox! It's enough to make one wonder how we get any of our mail!<sup>5</sup>

As for outright snooping, while it is not very likely that someone would pick your e-mail out of the billions floating around at any given moment, it is VERY easy and perfectly LEGAL for ANYONE to read it.

Every email includes a header, which contains the source of the email and lists every point the email has passed along the way, including the date and time of its passing. Since this "post stamp" is useless for correspondents, email programs normally hide it. Keep in mind that only number four below can prevent the hard core snooper from tracing your email back to your computer because the header. The header usually contains one or more IP addresses that can be traced back to you, your Internet service provider or organization. So, remember that "any mail administrator can glance at your mail and learn your country, city, [ISP], maybe even your telephone number and so on."<sup>6</sup>

The following are four things you must do to protect your email.

1. Set up a "test" email with the recipient to make sure your email will pass through any spam filters.
2. Work carefully to avoid mis-addressing, accidental "Reply to All" emails and other common errors
3. Don't use plain text email for anything important. Either encrypt the whole email or send an encrypted file attachment.
4. Select an email provider (usually an ISP) very carefully - "your email privacy may come to depend as much on his or her inherent ethics as on their tech skills."<sup>7</sup>

## ADVANCE

## How Much is Enough?



Last week one of our members called to ask how much security software he really needed. After that, I decided we needed one last column on computer protection because only a carefully balanced, multi-layered system of protection will prevent problems. No one tool can possibly protect against all forms of attack. Even the highly acclaimed Norton Antivirus security has been breached by Daniel Milisic's simple hack described in Fred Langa's article, and anti-spyware tools don't fare any better.<sup>8</sup> Tests show that no tool catches every form and instance of spyware, all the time.<sup>9</sup> Only a multi-layer defense can reasonably give you the protection which lawyers need for confidential matters.

I really liked Fred Langa's car analogy - literally ANY car can be stolen and ANY computer hacked. In both scenarios, the trick is to protect against casual thievery and defend it enough from serious attack that thieves will move on in search of an easier target.

- Level one: Always roll up the windows, lock your car and take the keys with you.

- Level two: Drive a car that has an anti-theft system built-in and use it.
- Level three: Add a steering wheel lock or pedal immobilizer.
- Level four: Get OnStar, Lojack or a similar system to track and recover the car if it is stolen.<sup>10</sup>

In the computer realm, you need the correct mixture of tools for maximum protection.

- Level one: Use one good full-time, always-on antivirus tool (like Norton AV or McAfee AV)
- Level two: Use one always-on firewall (such as Zone Alarm or Norton)
- Level three: Use several anti-malware tools (Spyware Blaster, WinPatrol, Ad-Aware, Spybot S&D, etc. are all good)
- Level four: Use a Network Address Translator to make sure you PC never connects directly to the Internet (MindTree for example).

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> "About THOMAS." THOMAS: Legislative Information of the Internet. 29 November 2004. The Library of Congress. 8 December 2004. <[http://thomas.loc.gov/home/abt\\_thom.html](http://thomas.loc.gov/home/abt_thom.html)>.
- <sup>2</sup> Pacifici, Sabrina I. "Sneak Preview of New Design and Features for THOMAS Legislative Info System." beSpacific: Accurate, Focused Law and Technology News. 24 November 2004. BeSpacific LLC. 29 November 2004 <<http://www.bespacific.com/mt/archives/007014.html#7014>>.
- <sup>3</sup> "An Updated THOMAS. THOMAS: Legislative Information of the Internet. The Library of Congress. 29 November 2004. <<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/redesign/>>.
- <sup>4</sup> Langa, Fred. "Langa Letter: E-Mail - Hideously Unreliable." InformationWeek. 12 January 2004. CMP Media LLC. 9 December 2004 <<http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=17300016>>.
- <sup>5 & 7</sup> Langa, Fred. "The LangaList Standard Edition." 6 December 2004. Langa Consulting LLC. <<http://langa.com/newsletters/2004/2004-12-06.htm#2>>.
- <sup>6</sup> "Email Privacy: The Threat of Mail Tracing." Email Privacy.info. 2004. Glastonberry Inc. 9 December 2004. <<http://www.emailprivacy.info/home>>.
- <sup>8 & 10</sup> Langa Fred. "Langa Letter: Norton Antivirus and the Single-Layer Defense Fallacy." InformationWeek. 6 December 2004. CMP Media LLC. 13 December 2004. <<http://www.informationweek.com/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=54800003>>.
- <sup>9</sup> Howes, Eric L. The Spyware Warrior Guide to Anti-Spyware Testing. 2 -15 October 2004. Eric L. Howes. 13 December 2004. <<http://spywarewarrior.com/asw-test-guide.htm>>

By Nancy Stinson, MLS  
nancy@starklawlibrary.org